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713 aside the missiles it struck me that I could do that. I asked
726 them to try me. Being their guest, they were loath to do so, but at last were persuaded. As the clods came to me, instead of knocking them aside I treated them as if one were fielding a cricket ball, and returned them home as quickly as one could. I fancy one of our smart wicket-keepers with a good pair of gloves on would have given these people a surprise. As it was they thought the catching of the missiles was wonderful, and stories went about that nine men at once throwing at the foreigner were unable to hit him. I am glad they never put their belief to the test.

526 While we were watching the fighters several horses were
496 brought for sale. One of the friends of Mr Long wished to buy a few horses, and we had a good bit of excitement as these horses were being tried. Just below the farmhouse of See-tieh there was a kind of race-course, oval in shape, where the young men constantly gallop their horses. These men are the most expert riders I have ever seen in China. Often they ride bareback at a tremendous pace, and often on a very hard black hide saddle. I was very much interested in the stirrup, which was a heavy wooden kind of shoe polished black. It looked almost as big and clumsy as a cowboy's stirrup. Here again I noticed that the Nosu do not follow the Chinese ways, but have a way of their own. They always ride toes in the stirrup, like Westerners, and not heels in, as do most Chinese. There is something to be said in favour of the Chinese method. The roads in West China are so rough, and there is constant danger of the horse slipping, so that heels in has some advantage over toes in. If the horse falls the rider can jump clear, and so save an awkward accident. I always rode toes in until one day my mule went down

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and I was caught with foot in stirrup unable to extricate myself. After that escape I learned the Chinese style, and now on the rare occasions when my horse slips I can usually clear myself easily. I have seen one or two nasty accidents which might have been avoided if the riders had followed the Chinese method. Of course when it comes to racing the heels are no match for the toes, although on a decent stretch of road, even with heels in, on a good pony one can ride at a very fast pace.

The finest Nosu rider I ever saw was a lame man, who got about with the help of a long stick. On his legs he was very slow and clumsy, but put him on a horse which had any mettle in it and the lame man was transformed. When urging the horse to its fastest he would stretch his legs up almost level with the horse's neck and lean backwards as far as possible, and then away like the lightning. He would ride the wildest horse in this way, and could break in the roughest of Nosu or Chinese bronchos.

The prices asked for the horses brought for our inspection were very reasonable. Ten ounces of silver, worth then about thirty shillings, was the price of the best pony brought there. I got hold of a black-and-white one which rendered me magnificent service for some years. It would take me up and down the hills in my district without ever a mishap. When starting off on a journey which he had been before, I could throw the reins over his neck, take out my book or newspaper and read for hours together. One had just now and again to look at the road and to give an occasional word to the pony. He would face anything I put him to, and had not the